

D C B W E B P A G E T E A M

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FEATURES LIST FOR WEB SITE

I have made an effort to seek out interesting web sites that have characteristics that support the type of things that I would like to see on the DCB web site. I have focused particularly on other sites here at LaRC to see what the "state of the art" is here. I have also looked outside LaRC to see what the "state of the art" is elsewhere. To little surprise the rest of the world is way ahead of us. However, many of the features included in commercial sites are not consistent with the functions our site should support.

Our mission is not to sell anything and as such we do not need to appeal to the average Joe. However, we do have a responsibility to our stakeholders to communicate our contributions and value to the nation. To meet our mission (as I see it) there are certain features that we should consider. I have started a list of desirable features below.

Functional Features

1. A "What's New" link is needed to keep repeat visitors apprised of additional content and other changes in the site. This is generally a reverse chronological list of additions and modifications to the site.
2. Quick navigation for prominent visitor types (i.e., industry customers, universities, K-12 students, general public, policy makers, in-house customers, branch staff). This could be accomplished in an introductory splash-screen that graphically (and texturally) directs the visitor to the appropriate areas of the site.
3. On-line forms to support clerical functions such as T&A, travel requests, leave requests, purchase requests, information requests (and responses), contact data, bibliographies, personal schedules, conference room scheduling, inventory control / loan requests, etc. These forms should be linked to

databases so that search and retrieval of the data is easy and the data can be processed readily. For example see URL - <http://fmcb.larc.nasa.gov/>

4. Voluntary registration of visitors to allow more customized service and opportunities for additional interaction. For example, notify interested folks of new content; request input on scope, balance, and focus of research activities; provide additional information in related areas or direct visitor to other links with similar content.
5. Links to related sites such as Wright Pat, Pax River, Ames, Lewis, Universities, etc. Related sites both grouped in a common area and distributed through content as appropriate.
6. Navigation aids to easily take visitor to the DCB HomePage regardless of how they entered the site.
7. Searchability of most content -- especially bibliographies, highlights, names of staff, projects, and reports/papers.
8. Easily accessible feedback capability. Form driven. Positive response (i.e., reply to all comments). Filtered based on content (sent to the right person to answer the question or request).
9. Plenty of contact information. Email, Phone, Fax, Web, Maps & Directions, Org Charts, etc.
10. Mechanism for regular upkeep and maintenance. New content continually added and old content removed, archived, relocated, etc.
11. Consistent and reliable performance from most browsers and bandwidth connections.
12. Secure areas for proprietary information. Perhaps even separate servers - an external and an internal server.
13. Automated analysis of usage - statistics, plots, etc.
14. FAQ area to address common questions regarding the function and operation of DCB.
15. Access to DCB products such as dynamic models, test data, algorithms, computer codes, etc. This could be accomplished via links to the LaRC Technical Reports and Software Servers. This might also involve links to an anonymous FTP server. (There is connection here with the DCB products team.)
16. Grant, MOA, Contract area that includes links to accomplishments, contract monitors, and grantees/partners.

Aesthetic Features

1. Branch Logo with attractive colors and meaningful symbolism. Animation would add an element of sophistication.
2. Splash screen welcome page with hot spots to direct visitors. Including intuitive icons and images as links to various content areas.
3. Gallery of images, animations, and videos of relevance to DCB research activities.
4. Rotating feature -- an article, graphic, highlight, movie, and such that is featured on the welcome page and is changed regularly. This feature would focus on

some aspect of DCB's accomplishments and activities and provide a sense of action and vitality to the site.

5. Liberal use of graphics to add interest to textural content. Care must be taken to process images to make loading as fast as possible and make text-only use of the site just as useful.
6. Short pages that "fit" well on a typical monitor screen.
7. Pages that load quickly (e.g., less than 15 seconds) on a slow connection (e.g., 28.8 Modem).